

Planning Collaboration Initiative
Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration
Final Summary – Phase 1 Conference Calls

BACKGROUND

The Planning Collaboration Initiative (PCI) Team has completed eight conference calls for the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) field and headquarters staff to solicit recommendations for drafting a national Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two agencies. These eight calls represent the completion of the first phase of the PCI outreach process. As mentioned in the January 2003 joint memorandum from Administrator Peters and Administrator Dorn, the PCI is intended to **(1)** establish a mechanism through which FTA and FHWA can enhance their ability to conduct joint program oversight activities, and **(2)** provide a means of improving the planning products delivered to customers through increased efficiency in the execution of cooperative planning services.

This series of eight conference calls began on March 5 and ended on April 10, 2003. Topics covered in these calls included:

- Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Approval and Amendments (March 5, 2003)
- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Review (March 11, 2003)
- Metropolitan and Statewide Planning Finding (March 12, 2003)
- Transportation Management Area (TMA) Planning Certification Reviews (March 18, 2003)
- Transportation Air Quality Conformity Determination (March 19, 2003)
- Corridor Studies/Alternatives Analysis and Flexible Funding (April 1, 2003)
- Congestion Management Systems and Intelligent Transportation Systems (April 2, 2003)
- Timeframes, Consistency, and Performance Measures (April 10, 2003)

PARTICIPATION

All 10 FTA Region offices and 32 FHWA Division offices, as well as 4 Metro offices and 1 FHWA Resource Center, have participated in one or more of the conference calls and/or through the PCI website (see Appendix A).

All FTA Region Offices

FHWA Division Offices

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • FHWA Alabama Division | • FHWA Idaho Division |
| • FHWA Alaska Division | • FHWA Illinois Division |
| • FHWA Arizona Division | • FHWA Indiana Division |
| • FHWA California Division | • FHWA Iowa Division |
| • FHWA Colorado Division | • FHWA Kansas Division |
| • FHWA Connecticut Division | • FHWA Maine Division |
| • FHWA District of Columbia Division | • FHWA Massachusetts Division |
| • FHWA Florida Division | • FHWA Michigan Division |
| | • FHWA Minnesota Division |
| | • FHWA Mississippi Division |

- FHWA Nebraska Division
- FHWA New Jersey Division
- FHWA New York Division
- FHWA North Carolina Division
- FHWA North Dakota Division
- FHWA Ohio Division
- FHWA Oklahoma Division
- FHWA Oregon Division
- FHWA Pennsylvania Division
- FHWA Tennessee Division
- FHWA Texas Division
- FHWA Utah Division
- FHWA Vermont Division
- FHWA Wisconsin Division
- Spencer Stevens – FHWA Pennsylvania Division
- Vince Valdes – FTA Office of Planning

Metro Offices

- Chicago Metro office
- Los Angeles Metro office
- Philadelphia Metro office
- Washington, DC Metro office

FHWA Resource Centers

- Midwestern Resource Center

PCI Management Team Members

- Tamiko Brim-Burnell – FHWA Michigan Division
- Peter Butler – FTA Region 1
- Larry Dwyer – FHWA Vermont Division
- David Kuehn – FHWA Office of Planning
- Mike Leary – FHWA Texas Division
- Keith Lynch – Philadelphia Metro Office
- Robin Mayhew – FHWA Office of Planning
- Paul Page – FTA Region 9
- Joan Roeseler – FTA Region 7

CONFERENCE CALL TOPICS

This report provides a synopsis of recommendations made during the conference calls focusing on the topic areas identified above. This report follows a preliminary summary report prepared on March 28, 2003.

I. STIP APPROVAL AND AMENDMENTS

The primary issue regarding STIP Approval and Amendments was timeliness. In this regard, field staff mentioned the challenges of:

1. Physical separation of offices
2. Coordination and communication between partners
3. Ensuring meaningful involvement of the agencies

Recommendations to address these challenges as they relate to STIP Approval and Amendment timeliness included:

- a. Provide information regarding Federal requirements for electronic signatures.
- b. Establish national protocols for the use of new technologies and procedures.
- c. Establish criteria for review and signature timelines.
- d. Develop an alternative dispute resolution process for overcoming delays in obtaining agreement and signatures.
- e. Set parameters and develop guidance for the delegation of signature authority to enhance flexibility and responsiveness (if it is deemed non-detrimental to the STIP Approval and Amendment Process).

II. UPWP REVIEW

Conference call participants were most concerned with improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the review of UPWP materials. The critical issues here were:

1. Roles and responsibilities of the field offices
2. Customer expectations
3. Coordination and communication among partners

The following recommendations came out of the conference call on UPWP review:

- a. Consider the Intermodal Planning Group (IPG) concept as potential model.
- b. Provide guidance on Federal requirements on the submission of electronic UPWP materials to expedite the review process.
- c. Establish protocols for the management and timeliness of UPWP review (possibly through a standard manual or handbook).
- d. Announce planning emphasis areas earlier. Provide a joint memo to Field offices prior to official announcement in the Combined Federal Register so that Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) can receive the information prior to preparing the UPWP.
- e. Provide guidance on single-signature requirements and protocol.
- f. Consider drawing a clearer distinction between the roles of planner and grant-writer in

FTA Region offices.

- g. Develop a policy that allows each agency to inform the other of staff changes and new roles, especially on key projects.
- h. Consider a realignment of the planning relationships between Field and Metro offices.
- i. Review lessons learned on collaboration from evaluations performed in 1999-2001 on the activities of the Metro offices.
- j. Review the FHWA survey of state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) and MPOs evaluating their experience working with FHWA.
- k. Examine how performance measures for collaboration could be included in the National MOU.
- l. Consider a pilot program to administer the Consolidated Planning Grant (CPG) program through the FHWA financial system.

III. METROPOLITAN AND STATEWIDE PLANNING FINDINGS

Overall, conference call participants felt that there was little controversy in this area because this process can often be closely tied to the STIP Approval process. That said, participants indicated that there were issues that needed to be discussed. Specifically:

- 1. Multimodal interests (an impression that FTA has less involvement in the Metro and Statewide Planning process due to logistical and staffing issues)
- 2. Effective public involvement
- 3. Signature authority
- 4. Different approaches among and within the Regions for submitting the Planning Finding

The following recommendations came from the call participants and are intended to create a common definition of multimodal planning and establish similar capabilities between the agencies in the area of Metro and Statewide Planning Findings.

- a. Include language in the National MOU that describes the philosophy of multimodal transportation planning.
- b. Consider establishing a planning office within the Region offices.
- c. Fund dedicated positions for planning staff within the Region offices.
- d. Provide transit-related cross training to FHWA field planning staff.
- e. Create a full-time planner in FHWA Division offices who works for both FTA and FHWA.
- f. Establish a single-signature pilot program in which FHWA signs the planning finding documents for both agencies.
- g. Evaluate and set the appropriate level of staff signature authority.
- h. Set minimum thresholds for service delivery but allow for tailored approaches at the Region/Division level.

IV. TMA PLANNING CERTIFICATION REVIEW

The discussion in this topic area revealed a number of issues regarding the planning certification reviews and the preparation of the certification report itself. Comments focused on the following:

1. Limited staff resources
2. Nature of the materials and resources used in the certification reviews
3. Roles and responsibilities of the coordinating agencies
4. Coordination and communication among the partners

A number of Divisions and Regions provided examples of successful practices used to manage the relationship between the agencies with the available staff resources. The conversation also stressed the importance of communication between the partners. The recommendations below were provided as suggestions for improving the efficiency of the certification review process:

- a. Consider setting reasonable timeframes for the completion of certification tasks while being mindful of available resources and the relative workloads of Region and Division staff.
- b. Consider hiring contractors – perhaps on a pilot project basis – to produce the final certification reports based on a standardized template.
- c. Encourage the submittal of written reports by MPOs prior to the actual certification review.
- d. Hire additional FTA planners.
- e. Consider providing templates for certification review documents such as letters, agendas, and the final report. Allow field staff to modify the template to accommodate the diverse situations of individual MPOs.
- f. Review past guidance (early and mid 1990s) on standardized certification reports.
- g. Consider establishing minimum standards of consistency for the content and format of the certification report in order to avoid the impression of special treatment of some MPOs.
- h. Implement mechanisms to encourage early and frequent collaboration between FTA and FHWA in the certification process, both in the review and final report stages.
- i. Consider allowing inclusion in the certification report only of those issues raised during the review.
- j. Consider developing a single-signature protocol for the certification report.
- k. Encourage Region/Division information sharing and staff exchanges.

V. TRANSPORTATION AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY DETERMINATION

Conference call participants discussed the process of coordinating between agencies when making a transportation air quality conformity determination within the planning process. Participants raised the following two issues:

4. FHWA-lead partnership on air quality conformity determination
5. Single-signature system for air quality conformity determination documents

Participants generally agreed that FHWA and FTA are satisfied with the current level of FHWA leadership in air quality conformity determination. FTA Region offices have limited staff resources and so rely on FHWA in-house expertise on air quality issues. The level of FTA involvement in air quality conformity determinations varies from Region to Region.

The following is a list of recommendations regarding air quality conformity determination.

- a. Investigate a single-signature system, recognizing that a template may not fit each state and Region. The National MOU could establish guiding principles related to each of the planning processes and products, with different examples of how to meet the guiding principles.
- b. Create pilot projects to implement the MOU principles and investigate more ideas.

VI. CORRIDOR STUDIES/ALTERNATIVES ANALYSES AND FLEXIBLE FUNDING

The conference call participants discussed the process of coordinating between agencies on Corridor Studies/Alternatives Analyses and Flexible Funding issues. Participants raised the following two issues:

1. Staff resources
2. Information sharing

Participants stated that limited resources constrain the level of FHWA and FTA joint participation on Corridor Studies/Alternatives Analysis. Given the sheer volume of studies and analyses occurring, participants agreed that selective joint involvement and division of labor is often the best use of time and resources. As a result, FTA continues to be more involved with the transit components while FHWA is more involved with the highway components of multi-modal projects.

The following is a list of recommendations on the topic of Corridor Studies/Alternatives Analyses and Flexible Funding offered for consideration in the development of a National MOU:

- a. Convene monthly interagency meetings to review all current corridor studies and projects.
- b. Include representatives from FTA and FHWA on mailings for major projects.

VII. CONGESTION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (CMS) AND INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS (ITS)

The call participants unanimously agreed that FHWA generally takes the lead role in working with MPOs and DOTs to develop and implement congestion management strategies.

Participants identified two main issues for discussion:

1. Limited in-house expertise at FTA
2. Coordination and communication

FHWA Division offices often have staff engineers and other resources dedicated to working on the development of local and regional congestion management technologies, but FTA Region offices rarely have similar in-house expertise. As such, FTA often looks to FHWA for appropriate support on issues of ITS and CMS. As ITS and CMS technologies are now expanding into the realm of public transit, the conference call participants discussed the growing importance of greater involvement by FTA in the planning and implementation of ITS and CMS.

The following is a list of recommendations on CMS and ITS planning and deployment:

- a. Encourage the addition of ITS engineers to the staffs of the FTA Region offices.
- b. Incorporate a review of ITS and CMS strategies into the triennial TMA certification review, as a means to involve FTA in congestion issues without adding additional review and oversight responsibilities.
- c. Consider having FHWA become the executive agency on all CMS and ITS issues, with FTA playing a supportive, advisory review function.
- d. Encourage FTA to review the congestion management proposals prepared by MPOs (generally only reviewed by FHWA).
- e. Support the concept of multi-modal planning for congestion management, in which the operations of the highway and public transit networks are considered together.
- f. Encourage FHWA and FTA to work together to develop collaborative agreements for the planning and deployment of regional ITS architecture in time for the April 2005 deadline for the deployment of a national ITS architecture.

VIII. TIMELINESS, CONSISTENCY, AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The conference call participants discussed timeliness, consistency, and performance measures in jointly delivering transportation planning products and services. Participants responded to the following three questions that were raised by the call facilitator:

1. What are the ways to measure the various aspects of performance, particularly timeliness and consistency?
2. How would FHWA and FTA hold themselves accountable to meet these performance measures?
3. How would the participants want the performance measures to be included in the National MOU?

The discussion focused generally on working relationships and customer service. Several participants discussed whether it was necessary to deliver consistent products and services across the nation. There was little discussion about how field offices could be held accountable for meeting timelines and ensuring consistency in planning products and services. One participant did recommend that if deadlines are routinely not met, the field office should be required to evaluate its working arrangements both internal and external. Some participants indicated that the National MOU should provide structure and expectations.

Throughout the discussion, participants responded to the question of “How would the participants want the performance measures to be included in the National MOU?” Participants made the following recommendations:

- a. Establish broad timelines, but allow for variations that enable field offices to be responsive to individual customer needs.
- b. Acknowledge that some issues may arise that will extend beyond the time limits set by a National MOU.
- c. Keep provisions for exceptions, but not so many that timelines become meaningless.
- d. Establish systematic timelines in order to identify problems.

- e. Provide oversight and stewardship to address identified problems with timeliness and consistency.
- f. Address expectations for performance; in a parallel document (not part of National MOU) detail the nuts and bolts of how to measure performance.

VI. OTHER ISSUES

From the outset, the PCI was intended to examine the process of the collaboration between FHWA and FTA, leaving substantive technical issues to other forums. Nonetheless, field staff have raised numerous substantive issues as the PCI effort has progressed. The following is a list of those topics, all of which present further opportunities for improving the delivery of the FHWA/FTA joint planning services.

- Fiscal Constraint – Methods for determining fiscal constraint.
- Criteria for STIP Amendments – Headquarters definition of what constitutes an administrative amendment.
- How to improve the underlying guidance detailing the function, criteria, and administration of the STIP?
- Request for more information on the development of new formulae for the distribution of FHWA planning and FTA Section 5303 planning funds based on 2000 Census data.
- More in-depth discussion of the Air Quality Conformity Finding.
- The possibility of developing an Office of Planning within each FTA Region office.
- Examination of a new, two-tiered TMA Certification Review process in which Tier 1 would be an infrequent certification review for MPOs with no significant problems and Tier 2 would be a more frequent review for “at risk” MPOs which need more assistance.
- A discussion of the process of transferring Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program money from FHWA to FTA. Participants indicated that the current process is more cumbersome than the previous process.
- Many FTA New Starts grantees feel that they are held to a different standard than highway projects. It was noted that if CMAQ money was granted for a highway project, however, there is little difference between the FHWA and FTA process.
- The challenge of encouraging public transit operators to become involved with the development of local and regional congestion management policies and systems. What is the role of FTA and the FTA grant-making process?
- How can FTA assist small and rural transit operators in understanding the importance of congestion management?
- How can FHWA and FTA work together to develop joint procedures to meet the 2005 deadline for the deployment of a national ITS architecture?
- How can FHWA and FTA encourage MPOs and state DOTs to approach congestion management from a regional, multi-modal perspective?
- How to measure the success of multi-modal planning?

- How to thoroughly train all field planners about the requirements of the planning products and services?
- Include questions on the “national survey” regarding timeliness and consistency in order for the Administrations to better understand what problems exist.

It should also be mentioned that the PCI Website has established a page for gathering comments on the topics discussed in the conference calls and on other collaboration-related themes. FHWA and FTA planners have been encouraged to contribute recommendations through the site; their comments are provided as an attachment to this report.

APPENDIX A

FHWA/FTA Planning Collaboration Initiative
Conference Call Registration

	Conference Calls								Website
	5-Mar	11-Mar	12-Mar	18-Mar	19-Mar	1-Apr	2-Apr	10-Apr	
	STIP Approval & Admndments	UPWP review	Metro/ Statewide Planning Findin	TMA Planning Certification Review	Transportation Air Quality Determination	Corridor Studies/AA and Flex Funding	CMS/ITS and Open Discussior	Timeframes and Performance Measures	
FTA Offices									
Region 1 - Boston	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Region 2 - New York	X								
Region 3 - Philadelphia	X								
Region 4 - Atlanta	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Region 5 - Chicago	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Region 6 - Fort Worth	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Region 7 - Kansas City	X		X	X	X	X		X	
Region 8 - Denver	X			X		X	X	X	
Region 9 - San Francisco		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Region 10 - Seattle	X		X	X	X		X	X	
FHWA Offices									
Alabama			X						
Alaska	X	X	X	X	X				
Arkansas									
Arizona	X	X	X	X	X				
California	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Colorado				X	X				
Connecticut		X		X					
Delaware									
District of Columbia		X							
Florida	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Georgia						X			
Hawaii									
Idaho									X
Illinois	X	X	X	X	X		X		
Indiana						X	X		
Iowa	X								
Kansas	X				X			X	
Kentucky									
Louisiana									
Maine					X				
Maryland									
Massachusetts	X		X						
Michigan	X			X	X			X	
Minnesota	X		X	X	X			X	
Mississippi	X			X	X				
Missouri									
Montana									
Nebraska	X	X	X	X					
Nevada									
New Jersey	X	X	X	X	X				
New Hampshire									
New Mexico									
New York				X	X				
North Carolina				X	X				
North Dakota				X	X	X			
Ohio				X	X				
Oklahoma						X			
Oregon	X						X		
Pennsylvania	X		X	X	X		X		X
Puerto Rico									
Rhode Island									
South Carolina									
South Dakota									
Tennessee			X	X	X		X		
Texas	X				X			X	
Utah								X	
Vermont	X								
Virginia									
Washington									
West Virginia									
Wisconsin				X	X				
Wyoming									
Metro Offices									
New York									
Philadelphia		X		X	X		X		
District of Columbia	X	X	X	X	X		X		
Chicago	X	X	X				X	X	
Los Angeles	X			X					
Resource Centers									
Eastern									
Midwestern					X		X		
Southern									
Western									

The names listed here are those who registered for the calls; others may have participated. Also, registration does not necessarily indicate participation.